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ABSTRACT

This is a report on further construct validation of the Sage Developmental Scales for the late adolescent period which intends to make these scales more useful to counselors of college freshmen. This study is also a further step in clarifying the dimensions measured by the Developmental Scales through the use of trait adjectives. It was hypothesized that freshmen who most resemble ninth graders would see themselves generally as less personally competent. The instruments used were the Sage Developmental Scales and Gough's Adjective Check List. The research design was essentially a double cross-validation one. Subjects included two groups of male students, and two groups of female students during a freshman orientation program. The general hypothesis was supported. The personological dimensions that emerged were quite similar for both sexes, yet differed in degree and quality. High scoring males and females alike can be described as suspicious, emotionally unstable, anxious and lacking in drive. These dimensions show that a developmentally immature freshman needs to experience certain remedial task situations, which might best be learned within a small peer group where socially competent models could teach adaptive responses. (SJ)

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# The Meaning of Developmental Status for College Freshmen

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This is a report on further construct validation on the Sage Developmental Scales (Sage, 1968) for the late adolescent period which intends to make these scales more useful to counselors of college freshmen. A full report on the derivation of these scales is found in Sage (1968). Briefly, in review, the Developmental Scales were constructed separately for males and females from self-descriptions that changed between grade nine and entrance into college on a longitudinal sample. The item pool used in the development of these scales came from the Minnesota Counseling Inventory (Berdie & Layton, 1957). Although the scales differentiate quite reliably between the two age extremes of the late adolescent developmental period, the scales, since they were empirically derived from a large item pool, are rather heterogeneous in nature and somewhat difficult to interpret. Because of this, the present study is a further step in clarifying the dimensions measured by the Developmental Scales through the use of trait adjectives.

Trait adjectives, either in the form of self-ratings or ratings by others, are commonly used in personality research to validate scales (Black, 1956; Gough, 1960; Jackson, 1967). Trait adjectives which correlate positively with a scale are seen as describing an individual who scores high on a particular scale. Gough (1965) emphasizes that trait adjectives are a useful device for interpreting personality scales, and also for finding the personological dimensions measured by such scales. In this study, it was hypothesized

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that freshmen who most resemble ninth graders would see themselves generally as less personally competent. This was hypothesized because a content analysis of the scales indicated that with increasing age, adolescents see themselves as more personally competent.

## METHOD

### Instruments

The instruments used were the Sage Developmental Scales (Sage, 1968) for males (Ds-M) and females (Ds-F) which consist of 51 and 31 true/false items respectively with only an 11 item overlap and Gough's Adjective Check List (ACL; Gough & Heilbrun, 1965) which consists of 300 trait adjectives.

### Research Design

The design was essentially a double cross-validation one: (1) Ss were divided by sex into random halves (some missing data made the groups somewhat unequal in Ns); (2) each group was analyzed for the association between the ACL trait adjectives and the Ds by the biserial correlation coefficient with a $p < .01$ set as the level of significance; [1] (3) trait adjectives that cross-validated, i.e., replicated for each sex at the $p < .01$ level were reported; and (4) the personological dimensions were analyzed as suggested by Gough (1965).

### Subjects

The Ss consisted of about one-half of a freshmen class. All testing was completed during a summer orientation program. The two male groups, $N_1$ =108

and $N_2$ =110, had means and standard deviations on Ds-M of 14.75 and 14.45 and 5.45 and 5.32 respectively. The two female groups, $N_1$ = 98 and $N_2$ = 101, had means and standard deviations on Ds-F of 13.38 and 13.43 and 4.22 and 3.59 respectively.

## RESULTS

The general hypothesis was supported in that persons scoring high on the Ds saw themselves as less personally competent (see Tables 1 and 2). The personological dimensions that emerged were quite similar for both sexes, yet differed in degree and quality. High scoring males and females alike can be described as suspicious, emotionally unstable, anxious and lacking in drive. Males appear more suspicious and egotistical than females whereas females appear more anxious and tempermental.

Berdie (1968)[2], also, found somewhat similar results as above with 100 male and 100 female freshmen when he correlated the Ds with the Minnesota Counseling Inventory (MCI) scales. Ds-M correlated highly for males with the inability to cope with reality (Reality, r = .82) and emotional instability (Emotional Stability, r = .76); and Ds-F correlated highest for females with the same scales but to somewhat less a degree (Reality, r = .55; Emotional Stability, r = .50). These two MCI scales are highly intercorrelated. Berdie (1968), also, noted that changes on Ds between grades 9 and 13 paralleled changes on the Reality scale. Apparently, developmental maturity relates to the ability to cope with reality and emotions.

## DISCUSSION

The personological dimensions found associated with the Developmental Scales show that a developmentally immature freshmen needs to experience certain remedial task - situations. He needs to learn: (1) how to become more assertive in social interactions, (2) how to cope with his emotions in relation to others, (3) how to understand the viewpoints of others, and (4) how to react constructively to criticism. These remedial tasks seem outside the realm of any single traditional one-to-one counselor role. Thus the learning of these coping behaviors might best be accomplished within a small peer group where socially competent models could teach adaptive responses, and provide vicarious extinction of feared social-stimulus situations (Sechrest and Wallace, 1967). This approach appears more promising than the often rather nebulous "what caused it" search which often occurs in counseling. Research has shown that socially competent models are effective transmitters of behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Hopefully, a greater use of competent social models will occur within college counseling settings as a means of helping the developmentally immature.

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## FOOTNOTES

[1]Biserial correlation which had splits of less than 10%, although the correlations were significant, were dropped.

[2]Personal communication with Ralph F. Berdie of the University of Minnesota, March, 1967.

Table 1

Trait Adjectives Associated with the Developmental Scale for Males and Personological Dimensions.

| Personological Dimension | Trait Adjectives |
|---|---|
| Suspiciousness | evasive, pessimistic, suspicious, fault-finding, irritable, cynical, dissatisfied, complaining |
| Emotional Stability | tempermental, excitable, self-pitying, peculiar, (not) clear-thinking, moody, (not) unaffected, awkward |
| Lacks Drive | indifferent, apathetic, commonplace, dull |
| Anxiety | tense, worrying |
| Egoism | selfish, arrogant, show-off, strong |

Table 2

Trait Adjectives Associated with the Developmental Scale for Females and Personological Dimensions.

| Personological Dimension | Trait Adjectives |
|---|---|
| Anxiety | worrying, self-punishing, tense, nervous, fearful, anxious, defensive, hasty, quick |
| Emotional Stability | emotional, fussy, changeable, high-strung, moody, immature, self-pitying, pleasure-seeking, touchy, foolish, disorderly, sentimental, tempermental, superstitious, awkward, shy |
| Suspiciousness | evasive, suspicious, pessimistic, distrustful |
| Lacks Drive | dreamy, gloomy, despondent, quiet |